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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: HIZBALLAH BLAMES USG FOR SUMMIT BOYCOTT

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (S) Hizballah denounced the Arab leaders', and in particular Lebanon's, boycott of the March 29-30 Arab League summit in Damascus, and blamed the U.S. for the boycott. Nevertheless, according to media reports and public statements, Hizballah is publicly portraying the summit as a success, primarily because it took place despite what the organization deemed as U.S. pressures. Privately, however, Hizballah's security chief acknowledged to a UN interlocutor that the summit produced nothing, which was what he expected. In the summit's aftermath, Hizballah insists that it, and not the U.S., still seeks a compromise to Lebanon's political impasse. End summary.

SUMMIT BOYCOTT "RIDICULOUS"

12. (U) Hizballah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Kassem, in a ceremonial speech given March 30, called the GOL's decision not to attend the Arab League summit in Damascus "ridiculous and deplorable." Shia spiritual leader Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, who exercises influence over Hizballah members, predicted in his March 29 sermon that the Arab leaders' boycott "will ruin the summit."

AND THE USG IS TO BLAME

13. (U) In what was a widespread effort to blame the U.S. for the Arab leaders' decision, Hizballah official Nabil Qawuk told local press before the March 29-30 event that "the U.S. has launched a massive diplomatic campaign to obstruct the summit." Several pro-Hizballah media outlets carried a similar story during the summit. Sheikh Fadlallah and the Hizballah resigned Minister of Energy and Water Mohammed Fneish also blamed the U.S. in separate March 29 speeches. On the same day, Hizballah international relations representative Nawwaf Moussawi predicted in a speech a failure of U.S. efforts in the Middle East over the next few months, saying that the "confrontation would be settled by the resistance's final word on the ground."

BUT THE SUMMIT SUCCEEDED,
IN DEFIANCE OF THE USG

14. (U) The fact that the summit took place makes the summit a

success, Sheikh Kassem argued in his speech. He praised the participants for defying the U.S., saying it is "proof that if we all stand together we can achieve something and impose many things on the U.S." Sheikh Qawuk said that holding the summit in Damascus is a defeat to U.S. policy in the Middle East. In a statement released by Hizballah on April 1, the organization said the summit "dealt a blow to everyone who bargained and worked on its failure, on top of which is the U.S."

¶5. (U) Hizballah-owned al-Manar TV ran clips that conveyed a good-natured atmosphere during the summit, highlighting a press conference in which Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa was seen as friendly with Syrian FM Walid Muallem. One clip focused on Muallem joking about Secretary Rice's trip to the region, saying "Forget about Rice, the summit has ended successfully," which was met with applause and laughter. The al-Manar journalist noted that this was a "strong message to those who did not want to see such a fun and amicable atmosphere."

HIZBALLAH, NOT THE USG,
SEEKS A SOLUTION

¶6. (U) In a prominent speech on March 24, a few days before the summit, Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah said that the opposition, including Hizballah, wants a political settlement in Lebanon, irrespective of the summit. Hizballah's April 1 statement reiterated its support for any initiative to solve the political crisis in Lebanon, and criticized Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Faisal for naming the opposition as obstructionists. Sheikh Qawuk asserted that the U.S. is not seeking any solution in Lebanon and is encouraging its allies to put additional pressure on Lebanon

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after the summit.

COMMENT

¶7. (S) Privately, Hizballah assesses the summit differently. A contact at the office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon told poloff that, in his meeting April 2 with his usual Hizballah interlocutor, security chief Wafiq Safa, Safa acknowledged that the summit produced nothing, as Safa expected. End comment.
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